Keynote Address by

Professor Georg Frerks

Introduction

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, and friends,

I like to express my thanks to the Vice-Chancellor and the organising Committee for inviting me to deliver the keynote address at this 4th International Symposium of South Eastern University of Sri Lanka (SEUSL). It is both an honour and pleasure to do this. It renews and intensifies the links I have had with the SEUSL for a period of over ten years already. I gladly remember the work I have done with Vice-chancellor Dr. Mohamed Ismail, Mr. Mansoor Mohamed Fazil and Mr. Rameez Abdullah from SEUSL on a project called 'Sri Lankan Discourses on Peace and Conflict' in the years 2003-2005. The in total four articles they produced for the edited volume 'Dealing with Diversity' are considered among the first ones that systematically analysed the position of the Muslim community, especially in the East and South East, during the Sri Lankan conflict. I also remember when the tsunami hit the SEUSL's community and the infrastructure at University Park was damaged. We were able to provide a small donation from the Dutch counterpart universities as a token of solidarity with the SEUSL at those difficult times. Finally I had the honour to deliver a keynote address at the SEUSL's convocation ceremony in 2012, where I dealt with the role of conflict studies in analysing the contemporary situation in Sri Lanka.

The subject matter of SLEU's 4th International Symposium ''Emerging Trends & Challenges on Sustainable Development' is extremely topical at this very moment. Not only the world and the global community as whole, but also Sri Lanka and its diversity of population groups are facing challenging times. Both development and peace are under threat in large parts of the world. Violence is engulfing the Middle East, North and Central Africa and parts of the former Soviet Union. Shockingly, the global number of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) has reached the absolute record of fifty million this year. But also most post-war countries still struggle to overcome their ordeals, while several peace-building and state-building operations have been beset by disillusionment and setbacks, and serious doubts exist as to how best deal with countries emerging from conflict. In fact, achieving durable peace seems to be more a matter of hope than of evidence-based practice.

In the economic realm, Europe has hardly managed to overcome its deepest economic crisis since the World Recession of the 1930s and economic progress is still extremely fragile and vulnerable in many parts of the world. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that nearly 870 million people of the 7.1 billion people in the world, or one in eight, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2010-2012. Almost all the hungry people, 852 million, live in developing countries, representing 15 percent of their population. Asia has the largest number of hungry people (over 500 million), but Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest prevalence (24.8 percent of the population). Though partly due to the efforts under the Millennium Development Goals extreme poverty has been reduced to 18% of the world population, this implies that still 1.2 billion people live on less than US$ 1.25 per day, of which two thirds in just five countries, i.e. India, China, Nigeria, Bangladesh and Congo.

In addition, sizeable percentages of people that escape from poverty may easily fall back into it again. A report by the Overseas Development Institute asserts that "in rural Kenya and in South Africa, surveys over varied periods of time have found that 30% to 40% of those who manage to escape from poverty fall back, rising to 60% during one recent period in rural Ethiopia. Even in successful Southeast Asian economies, such as Indonesia and Viet Nam, the figure has been around 20%". So, success in poverty reduction is not always sustainable.

Another qualification that needs to be made is that the modest success in global extreme poverty reduction has been accompanied by growing inequality, so much so that according to Oxfam the world's 85 richest

billionaires own the same amount of wealth as the world population's poorest 3,5 billion or 50%. Even where progress has been made in certain countries and sectors, critical questions have arisen about the sustainability of those efforts, both in an environmental, socio-economic and political sense. Much development is associated with irreparable environmental damage or an authoritarian political climate with harm done to the poorest and human freedoms under attack. Perhaps it is also not surprising as well, that conventional development cooperation faces a crisis and that fundamental questions can be raised about its tenets, achievements and modus operandi. The post-2015 development agenda is heavily debated and there is a need to reflect deeply on a number of issues and principles related to traditional forms of aid in post-colonial settings. Later in my keynote I shall return to some of those issues.

Sri Lanka's recent political and economic performance in a nutshell

Sri Lanka is in many ways a special case in this larger pessimistic picture. The Government of Sri Lanka has ended a 26-year during conflict with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) through a military victory and embarked on a post-war trajectory that, according to the Government itself, has shown substantial progress and success. A military campaign with high military and civilian losses led finally to the defeat of the LTTE in May 2009, and involved the complete extinction of its military and political leadership, including its leader Vellapullai Prabakharan. The human cost of the war was high. Some one million people fled the country and approximately 800,000 were internally displaced, often more than once. Frequently cited estimates of the number of people killed over the whole course of the war range from 80,000 to well over 100,000. This would include the deaths of 27,000 soldiers from the Sri Lankan armed forces that the government acknowledges. The war also led to the militarization of society , arguably undermining Sri Lanka's erstwhile good human rights record. Though the war was not a civil war between different ethnic communities, it nonetheless has led to increased ethnic and social divisions and mutual distrust, as well as economic disparities between the war-affected areas and the rest of the country.

On 19 May 2009 total victory was claimed by the Government under the leadership of President Mahinda Rajapakse and a post-conflict period of reconstruction was ushered in to deal with the political and military exigencies of the situation and the socio-economic reconstruction of the war-affected areas in the North and East of the country. The last months of the war produced nearly 300,000 IDPs. The Government of Sri Lanka with the help of its armed services took overall responsibility for providing the basic needs such as temporary shelter, food, water, sanitation and medicine to this large displaced population with the help of some United Nations (UN) agencies, but other international and local non-governmental agencies were not granted access, ostensibly for security reasons. The government came under international criticism for the alleged deficiency of the humanitarian aid it provided, and the time it took to conduct the security screening of the IDPs. Currently, all but 750 from the 11-12,000 suspected and surrendered members of the LTTE have been released after undergoing a rehabilitation program. Also children and youth forcibly conscripted by the LTTE were sent to several rehabilitation centers in the country. All have now been released back to their family members at the completion of their rehabilitation period.

All those displaced in 2008-9 have moved out of the welfare camps with the majority having been returned to their places of origin, though about 90,000 people continue to be displaced, most of them living with their family in other parts of the country. The government has provided both a cash grant and some material support for the returnees, but this is generally considered inadequate for the complete recovery of their lost assets. Apart from providing relief services to those returning from displacement, the government has proceeded with de-mining activities in the war-affected areas, clearing the ground for resettlement and resumption of agricultural and other livelihood activities. The government launched an ambitious program for the socio-economic reconstruction in the North and East of the country. International resources, including hundreds of millions of dollars from India and China, have been harnessed for a major physical reconstruction of the north, with roads, railroads, ports and other infrastructure being rebuilt on a large scale. Also training programs and livelihood

support have been provided, although arguably not to the degree needed in view of the destruction and economic decline in the areas affected by the war.

Despite its efforts in the post-war north and east, the Sri Lankan government has come under increasingly severe criticism at the international level. The way the war was ended is subject to considerable international and national controversy. A UN Panel of Experts, appointed by the Secretary-General to look into alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights law during the final stages of the armed conflict in Sri Lanka has called for a full, international investigation into the conduct of both the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE and the UN Human Rights Council has recently adopted a resolution to start such an investigation.

The Sri Lankan authorities in turn have completely rejected the UN panel report and claimed that any further steps on the basis of recommendations of the report would undermine reconciliation and endanger the peace that has reigned on the island over the past five years. The government alleged that the report was not based on credible information sources. It also has rejected several other accusations that have been expressed by the donor community, national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and observers and journalists from Sri Lanka and abroad. In fact, the government has criticized foreign NGOs and donors of being partial in the conflict, sometimes even suggesting a 'western conspiracy' against the country and its government. It has refused all cooperation with the UN investigation.

Apart from ending the conflict by itself, Sri Lanka is also exceptional in the sense that it has shown a sustained growth of its economy both during and after the war, thereby reducing poverty and unemployment to levels unknown in most other lower middle income countries in the world. The global economic recession in 2008-2009 had adverse effects on some aspects of the local economy such as a decline in export prices and foreign exchange reserves and a rising cost of living. However, there was no breakdown or stagnation of the overall economy and employment rates remained quite stable. The steady flow of foreign remittances from overseas employees, relatively lower oil prices, a decline in imports and a national drive to promote local agriculture may have cushioned the negative impacts of the international financial crisis.

Let me briefly mention some salient macro-economic indicators that demonstrate Sri Lanka's favorable economic position. Sri Lanka's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita at market prices stood at US$ 2,057 in 2009 and at US$ 2,923 in 2012. It has in the meantime crossed the US$ 3,000 mark and Sri Lanka's Central Bank governor stated that the US$ 4,000 mark may be reached as soon as in 2015. The annual growth of the gross domestic product (GDP) has been sustained and reached 7.3% in 2013. According to the Asian Development Bank GDP growth is expected to accelerate to 7.5% in 2014 and maintain that rate in 2015, with inflation between 5 and 6%. In 2010 the International Monetary Fund graduated Sri Lanka from a Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust eligible country to a middle income emerging market status, implying that the country is not anymore entitled to receive official development aid. In fact, it has become too rich to receive development assistance.

The 2013 fiscal deficit is estimated at 5.8% of GDP, in line with the government's target while the ratio of government debt to GDP fell to 78.4% in 2013. This compares quite well with a range of European countries that have much higher deficits and debt ratios. Sri Lankan exports and imports both posted positive growth in the second half of 2013. The tourism boom continued in 2013 with the number of visitors growing by 27% to reach 1.2 million. Sri Lanka's post-conflict growth has been buoyed by construction and by transport and telecommunications. The government's focus on infrastructure and post-conflict reconstruction and development has supported this expansion and will continue to drive growth in the medium term. Overlooking these macro figures, one might assume that all is well with Sri Lanka and that there are hardly any economic and political challenges. Unfortunately, I do not believe that this is completely true and shall outline below a few political and economic development challenges or 'disconnects' that still need attention, both in the policy realm and in terms of academic scrutiny.

Sri Lanka's current political and economic development challenges

Dealing with a diversity of ethnic identities

Sri Lanka is home to different ethnic communities with their own (sub-) national identities. Historical events, myths and chronicles have been used to frame these identities and they may have been exacerbated by the recent conflict. However, it is far too simple to characterize the conflict as a primordial ethnic conflict, as sometimes is done. In fact, there has been never a 'civil war' between the Sinhalese and Tamil communities per se. While there have been some serious episodes of communal rioting and violence, nearly all of these could be shown to have been politically inspired and / or organized. The conflict is better understood as the effect of failed nation-building and the inability to develop an overarching Sri Lankan identity that could overcome sub-national ethnic identities. The conflict was also clearly a consequence of bad, ill-informed governance by successive governments in the post-independence period, fuelled in part by deeply-held assumptions of Sri Lanka as an essentially Buddhist and Sinhalese land and fears that this was endangered by Tamils or to a lesser degree by Muslims. It was a long series of contested government measures, which Tamils came to see as unfairly limiting their opportunities and political power, and the repeated revocation of agreements made with the Tamil leadership that ultimately have alienated and radicalized the Tamil youth, who lost confidence in the Tamil leadership and the possibility of a negotiated solution within one unitary state to address their grievances. The call for an independent Tamil homeland and the militant path chosen by them to achieve this became eventually endorsed or condoned by the mainstream Tamil parties as well. We can thus see how post-independence Sinhala nationalism, drawing on myths and traditional Buddhist narratives, had the effect of producing a rival Tamil nationalism, with both ideologies being used to justify terrible violence in each community's name.

The major challenge now is to convince the minorities both in word and practice that the original grievances do not anymore hold, and that Sri Lanka is indeed a place for all Sri Lankans of all ethnic identities, as stated by the President and that there is no disconnect between guarantees for the country's minorities and the policies and actions put by the Government in practice. The International Crisis Group mentions however that there is a systematic 'Sinhalisation' policy in the cultural and symbolic domain, for example by rendering Tamil names of villages and streets in Sinhalese, putting up war monuments, and erecting Buddha statues. In order for the President's statement to be accepted as real and genuine, it must be experienced and lived by those concerned. The emergence of the radical extreme Sinhala Buddhist Bodhu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force) and their alleged involvement in deadly violence against Muslims in Beruwela and Aluthgama and the apparent impunity of those guilty, is not very reassuring in this connection. It is of the essence that the political and socio-economic grievances underlying the conflict eventually will be addressed by the government, such as respect for minority rights, cross-ethnic and religious equity and equal access to political power, that are deemed to guarantee future stability, even though there has been a convincing military defeat of the LTTE. But apart from the Tamils, the Muslims also need to be reassured that the government protects them against Sinhalese-Buddhist extremism. A recent study by the Citizens' Commission on the Expulsion of Muslims from the Northern Province by the LTTE in October 1990 titled "The Quest for Redemption: The Story of the Northern Muslims" shows that subsequent governments have paid little attention to the fate of those Muslims. The failure to respond to the expulsion itself, the inadequate assistance to those expelled, and the lack of support for resettlement currently all amount to a systematic neglect of the issue and continues up to now, according to the Commission.

The functioning of the state

Though Sri Lanka has continued to have democratic elections and peaceful regime changes throughout, there are some notable flaws in the system. One is the majoritarian nature of its democracy that allowed overruling of minority rights and needs. As a consequence, governance has been considered by the Tamil and Muslim minorities as exclusionary, if not discriminatory. A second problem is the political patronage that pervades the political system and also has thoroughly divided the society in those within and outside of the system, apart from its effects on the standards and incorruptibility of the public service. There is the seemingly ever

increasing concentration of power in the executive, undermining the classical trias politica, and arguably especially the independence of the judiciary. Though this was perhaps defensible in view of the earlier conflict and the necessity to act without delay, there are no reasons to continue this executive preponderance currently, but this seems exactly what is happening at present. On the other hand, Sri Lanka has an educated electorate that has shown to be able to use its powers and prerogatives, and democracy seems to have a level of resilience, though several relevant public and private institutions have received blows and seem unable to operate as they should. A good functioning vibrant civil society, including a variety of NGOs in different fields, is an essential part of a proper functioning, democratic 'governance state'. It is also essential in terms of socio-economic development. Sri Lanka has always had a wide range of local-level civil society organizations. It is difficult to imagine how its development, humanitarian aid in the post-tsunami and war period and its reconstruction efforts would have looked like without the involvement of those countless organizations and their staff. One hardly has to state the obvious, i.e. that the curtailment of such a potential is harmful to the country in both political and socio-economic terms.

Dealing with economic disparities

A major challenge in the field of economic development are the wide economic disparities between the Western province (that owns 50% of GDP) and the rest of the country, especially the war-affected areas, and between poor and rich and between urban and rural. Though on average the national poverty headcount ratio has declined from 8.9 percent in 2009/10 to 6.7 percent in 2012/13, there are widespread differences per district. Colombo District had the lowest count with 1.4% and Mullaitivu the highest with 28.8%. All conflict-affected districts are well above the average: Batticaloa 19.4%, Jaffna 8.3%, Mannar 20.1%, Mullaitivu 28.8%, Kilinochchi 12.7%, and Trincomalee 9.0%. These differences do not only have regional, but also ethnic implications and therefore require adequate actions in order to avoid feelings of deprivation and marginalization. Though a few districts among these, such as Jaffna and Trincomalee, have shown progress, further study is needed to see what economic stimulus is needed to create the necessary impact. There are some indications that the larger infrastructural works undertaken by the Government may not trickle down to the lower socio-economic strata of society. A recent study found that: "there is a clear disconnect between the mega development projects taking place in the Northern and Eastern provinces and the development of the local communities. People at community level in expressing their immediate needs to rebuild their lives are largely unaware of or excluded from the large scale economic development projects. This disconnect is experienced by both women and men in the communities." For people to experience progress, mechanisms need to be in place or designed to see that macro-economic change will also reach them. However, the above mentioned study asserts that "most of the planned development interventions are concentrated in urban centers and their impact on the local communities is yet to be seen. In the local communities, women and men in general are aspiring to revive their traditional subsistence economies that prevailed prior to the conflict and there are hardly any opportunities created for them to grab new resources or move into new forms of livelihoods. The only opportunity that people get is to work in manual labor work available for both men and women. [But] Mega development projects are exclusively controlled by external parties and there is very little space for local communities to participate in such work." In fact, it is questionable whether the Government's emphasis on large infrastructural works is sufficient to kick-start economic development. In his study on linkages between development and social capital in Sri Lanka's war-torn villages, Herath argues that a variety of factors need to be in place: "The causal factors of development function in combination, rather than in isolation. In order to achieve more development, the presence of one of these factors is insufficient; development requires a positive interplay between these factors." The economist Weerakoon doubts whether the Government is able to implement so called second generation reforms to address the public policies, regulations and institutions (often of a political nature) that impede growth. He asserts that: "even in the absence of efforts to improve overall efficiency in the economy, a reconstruction related economic boom can lift the country's economic growth in the medium term. But, without broad based reforms, the boom is likely to be relatively short-lived, leaving behind macro-economic instability in its wake".

Dealing with the gender gap

There are still noticeable gender differences in socio-economic status and socio-political entitlements and capitals. According to the Sri Lanka Human Development Report 2012, Sri Lanka ranks at 97 out of 187 countries – scoring 0.692 on the Human Development Index (HDI). The Gender Inequality Index (GII) which measures inequality in achievements between women and men, is based on three dimensions: reproductive health (measured by the maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births, adolescent fertility per 1,000 women aged 15-19), empowerment (measured by parliamentary representation and the percentage of people who have at least lower secondary education in the age group of 25 years and over), and labour market (labour force participation rate for the 15-64 age group). Table 1 below shows that Sri Lanka GII performs somewhere between medium and high development categories, but that some of its scores belong to the high or even very high development category.

What holds back a strong overall GII, is the poor political representation of women and their low participation rate in the labour force. In an analysis of the low political female representation, Sunimalee Madurawala asserts that:

Table 1: Gender Inequality Index and related indicators

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	GII	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 live births (2008)	Adolescent Fertility rate (2011)	Seats in national parliament (% female) (2011)	with at least secondary education (% ages 25 and older) (2010)	Labour force participation rate (%) female (2009)
Very high human development	0.224	16	23.8	21.5	82.0	52.8
High human development	0.409	51	51.6	13.5	61.0	47.8
Medium human development	0.475	135	50.1	17.3	41.2	51.1
Low human development	0.606	532	98.2	18.2	18.7	54.6
World	0.492	176	58.1	17.7	50.8	51.5
Sri Lanka	0.419	39	23.6	5.3	56.0	34.2
Source: UNDP (2011) Human Development Report 2011, Sustainability & Equity: A Better Future for All.						

"Even though the majority of the country's population is female, there are only 13 female parliamentarians in the current parliament, of which 3 are from the national list (less than 6% of the total 225 seats). This scenario is even worse when it comes to the district level. In 16 of the 25 districts, the proportion of female representation at the national parliament is 0.1%. According to the Sri Lanka Human Development Report 2012, political parties are the single biggest barrier to women's greater participation in politics. Males are preferred over females, both by political parties and voters, to be nominated and to be elected. "Reasons for the low representation of women in politics start at the personal level, where fewer women than men self-elected themselves for a political career because of socio-cultural, economic, and psychological barriers". The vicious climate of violence in the election process has also become an influential factor in discouraging interested females from entering the political arena."

The Gender Gap Report of 2013 of the World Economic Forum ranked Sri Lanka 55th among the 136 countries covered in the Report with a Gender Gap Index of 0,702. This report shows strong sub-indices on female education and health, but poorer scores in the economic and political fields. In terms of labour force participation, wage equality and estimated earned income, the female-to-male rations are all fairly unequal.

Apart from those macro-level data, a more fine-grained analysis yields many more detailed insights. These include observations on how the war has impacted on women and gender relations and how this has developed in the post-war trajectory. Many studies have shown how numerous women had to bear the double burdens of domestic work and taking care of the income when the males were away or lost their lives during the war. It still needs to be better ascertained by ethnographic field work how their situations evolve after the war. Jayasundere and Weerackody state that: … "women's mobility and access to economic resources and opportunities are still restricted by fears to their personal security despite the end of the war as well as by social norms. While men too have fears of safety, the level of vulnerability is far more for women, especially women heading their households. They also observe restrictions caused by traditions and norms in largely patriarchal communities and social stigma against women who step out traditionally accepted roles for women." This all implies that a gender-sensitive approach needs to be followed. Whereas above I already indicated that many macro development projects and programmes risk of not trickling down enough, the poor economic gender scores of women will even exacerbate the situation for them. In fact, they face barriers at two levels: the limited trickle down per se and their own low economic participation.

What type of development is needed?

The last issue I want to raise is what type of development one actually wants or needs in Sri Lanka. As of recent there has been a lot of criticism on the role that externally aided development has played globally as well as in Sri Lanka. This has also reverberated in academic debates, where some more radical voices have argued that aid has worked counterproductive or is a western imposition focused on the interests of the metropolis at the detriment of the recipient countries.

Around a case study of the village Denagama in Southern Sri Lanka , the late prof. Ranaweera Banda deals with issues of knowledge production, both globally in terms of transnational culture, and in the Sri Lankan context from pre-colonial and colonial times to the post-independence era. In the contemporaneous setting he specially elaborates on the role development plays. He describes how development as a knowledge and practice is promulgated and promoted by international development experts, local elites and local bureaucrats, and interacts with the village that, however, shows its own agency in appropriating or rejecting part of the development package offered. Ranaweera Banda posits a nearly straight and linear connection from the colonial discourse that considered non-Western societies as entities that were still to be civilized with the intervention of the west, to the current development or modernity paradigm. Though now operating in a post-colonial setting the former colonizers are still "interested in establishing their dominance in non-Western countries for political, economic or strategic reasons" and started to interfere "in the form of cultural, economic and development programs thereby re-enacting a new type of economic colonialism in non-Western countries" (Ranaweera Banda 2013: 16). Ranaweera Banda argued that "development is not a set of actions aimed primarily at gaining growth and welfare, but rather an external force penetrating into a community from outside with powerful ideologies. In this context development benefits are secondary as they act as the vehicle of transmitting such powerful ideologies. Our extensive fieldwork at the local community demonstrates how power associated with development discourse has changed and revised the ways of thinking and actions of the community both at the community and individual levels", according to Ranaweera Banda (2013: 17). This idea of development is also linked to a powerful, interventionist state that is not only responsible for the development and welfare of its subjects, but in line with a more Foucauldian notion of 'governmentalization' also controls the lives and bodies of its population through a complex assemblage of institutions and procedures (Ranaweera Banda 2013: 17). An author like Mark Duffield (2007) observes in the same vein that western interventionist discourses emanate from a metropolitan desire to rule the world. He, for example, argues that western humanitarian and peace

interventions are primarily technologies of power aimed at controlling people living on the margins of global society.

I would like to propose that in the domain of Sri Lanka studies more of such critical intervention studies would take place. Without necessarily having to return to the earlier dependencia or centre-periphery theories, there is enough scope and reason to critically deconstruct the development enterprise and its associated discourses, as done by authors as Escobar and Ferguson. It is, however, needed to do this on the basis of serious academic work. Currently, much of the discourse on donors in Sri Lanka, seems to be a heavily politicized affair without the usual rigour and nuance of academic debate.

I personally feel that the modernist, economic paradigm is still very powerful and popular among Sri Lanka's ruling elites, despite the government's ambivalent and sometimes problematic relationship with the western powers. Yet, the government's discourse, whether promoted as the Mahinda Chintana or as the 'Wonder of Asia' still boils down to being very much a modernist, developmentalist approach full of large-scale infrastructural works, clearly smacking of the macro-economic modernization paradigms of the 1950s, where market capitalism went hand-in-hand with fairly strong state direction and initiative.

Economic development is also seen as the recipe for the post-war reconstruction agenda of the government. It can be questioned, however, whether economic development on its own is sufficient to deal with the post-war challenges Sri Lanka is facing, such as the disconnects I have discussed above, and other more politically oriented ones I have elaborated elsewhere, but will not go into now due to lack of time.

Anyhow, a more fundamental debate on development discourses, approaches and implementation practices in Sri Lanka as a means for social transformation and post-war rehabilitation could be profitably initiated as a theme for Sri Lanka Studies. It seems to me that there is much about the war and post-war trajectory in Sri Lanka that merits further academic attention.

What we hardly know, for example, is how it was to live one's daily lives during the war. I believe that thorough academic ethnographic studies can help us to understand the everyday lived experience of war. How has war been lived through by peasants, housewives, students, shopkeepers and minor civil servants? How did they cope with the challenges faced and how did they engage with the warring parties? What forms of resilience could be observed under such conditions? How was it to live daily under the control of the LTTE or under strict security restrictions? How were these areas administered by those in power? We do not know much about these 'low politics' of everyday survival and there are hardly any detailed ethnographic studies done and published on such issues. In particular, and with the notable exception of the earlier mentioned final report of the Citizen's Commission, there is a dearth of information on the Muslim communities affected by the conflict and also on what has happened to them since the war is over.

With regard to the post-war trajectory it may be of the essence to look into the original root causes of conflict and associated grievances. It would be highly interesting and relevant from both an academic and practical viewpoint to see how these are addressed in order to make post-war reconstruction and peace building meaningful to the largest possible group of stakeholders and thereby hopefully help sustain the peace.

Other pertinent issues that may deserve academic attention include the material success or otherwise of post-war reconstruction, resettlement and reintegration programmes by the government and international donors. Close monitoring may help prevent mistakes and dissatisfaction, and provide voice to the intended beneficiaries. I mentioned in my talk the prevailing large economic disparities that warrant further action and study, as well as the gender gap.

A more difficult topic to investigate is how inter-communal relations have developed since the war is over and whether or how reconciliation is possible in case violence has driven communities apart, as it unfortunately still does. This can only be understood by in-depth, local and community-embedded, longitudinal studies, something that the SEUSL would be ideally suited to provide.

Conclusion

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, I shall not try to be exhaustive. Teaching and studying the development / conflict and post-conflict nexus is a necessary thing to do, both from a national, regional and global perspective. These endeavours are relevant for any attempt to reach a situation of sustainable peace and development that may overcome painful memories of conflict and suffering, and provide a basis for a peaceful co-existence. Recent data show that three-quarters of all conflicts of the last ten years have been recurrences of earlier conflicts. Whereas post-war moments can be a window of opportunity for establishing stability, justice, reconciliation and development, this opportunity is often squandered in practice. As Darby and Mac Guinty show, the 'management of peace' is full of obstacles. Factors contributing to failure include: ignoring fundamental conflict issues and key actors; weak institutions; failure to implement reconstruction programmes; continuation of corrosive violence; lack of economic development, failure to enter into negotiations and strike deals. As I have indicated Sri Lanka is fortunate to have ended its 26-years' period of war, even though its end is deemed controversial. The country also shows a good economic performance and can boast a number of impressive macro-level indices. On the other hand I outlined a number of disconnects and contradictions that warrant further attention. Independent, critical, rigorous and thorough academic research can provide the necessary information to prevent the unravelling of peace and provide a sustainable economic basis for successful post-war interventions and development.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am convinced that the SEUSL can play an important role in all this, not only for the benefit of its Muslim constituency in the South East, but for the benefit of the country as a whole and all communities. The 4th International Symposium is an excellent occasion to embark on this journey and start this endeavour. With this I thank you for your attention and wish you a very inspiring 4th International Symposium!